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A Dissuasive from worldly-mindedness, in order
to the due Exercise of Christian Charity.

A
S E R M O N

Preached in the Chappel of *Popler*,
On the 8th of *September* 1698.

Before the Trustees for the Charity of
Captain *William Curtis*, deceased.

Attest the true and correct copy of the
report of the Committee of the Senate

SEERMON

Preached by the
Obedient Slave



Before the
Captain William Carter

A Dissuasive from worldly-mindedness, in order
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Preached in the Chappel of *Popler*,
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W H O,

In the Year 1669, bequeathed a Rent-charge of *Sixty Pounds per Annum*, for the Release of Poor Prisoners, The Relief of Aged People, A Weekly Distribution of Bread, and the Placing out of Poor Children to Trades: For the Benefit of the Poor in the Hamlets of *Popler, Mile-end, Limus, and Ratcliff*, for ever.

Published at the Request of the Trustees.

By *Josiah Woodward*, Minister of *Popler*.

L O N D O N, ⊕

Printed for *Brabazon Aylmer*, at the *Three Pigeons*
over against the *Royal Exchange* in *Cornhill*, 1698.

T O

Sir Henry Johnson, Kt.

Hugh Squier, Esq;

Capt. Joseph Stevens,

Trustees for the Charity of

Captain William Curtis.

Gentlemen,

AS it is generally agreed, that you have one of the most prudent and well-advised Charities under your hands, so it must be granted, that you have managed it with great Honour. For, as the Worthy Founder took all imaginable Care to have his Charity as lasting as the World it self, so have you, for many Years past, put your Accounts into such an exact Method, as will not only justify your own Faithfulness, but make it difficult for any that succeed you to be Unfaithful.

And perhaps it is in some Measure a Fruit of this Noble Charity, that a most Commodious School for the Education of Youth, has been Erected and Endowed by one of you, for the perpetual Benefit of

*At South-Milton in Devon, for 30 poor Children, erected at the Cost of 700 l. and endowed with 50 l. per Ann. for ever, by Mr. H. S.

Posterity: Mr. H. S.

The Epistle Dedicatory.

* To the value of above 3000l the whole. *Posterity: With many other very * considerable Deeds of Charity.*

Had Plato seen such Pious Improvements of Wealth, he might have struck out that uncharitable Reflection of his, That it is impossible for any one to be very Rich, and very Good. Nor would Celsus (had he well consider'd it) have been so fond of that false Sentence of Plato's, as to commend it even to Blasphemy.

May it please God therefore to stop the Mouths of the Adversaries of our Holy Religion, by the exemplary Lives of all its Votaries. May all Persons who are eminently Great, be conspicuously Good; and give such Demonstrations of the Mistake of that Philosopher, as Abraham, David, and many others have done, who though vastly Rich in Worldly Possessions, were yet more so in Good Works.

And may it please Him, who sometimes delighteth to choose Mean things, to confound things that are Mighty, to assist this Sermon with his Grace, that it may somewhat retrieve us from that Selfish narrowness of Spirit, which hath been our great Reproach, and almost our utter Ruin: And may it excite a publick and generous, that is, a truly Christian Spirit amongst us, to the Glory of Almighty God, the just Honour of our Divine Religion, and to the Peace, Safety, and Renown of our Native Country: Which is the earnest Desire of,

Gentlemen,

Your very respectful Servant,

Josiah Woodward.

Prov.

Prov. 23. 5.

Wilt thou set thine Eyes upon that which is not? For, Riches certainly make themselves Wings; they flee away as an Eagle towards Heaven.

THE occasion of my speaking to you this day, is to recommend the noble Vertues of *Charity and Alms-giving*; of which the *Founder* of that great Charity which is yearly distributed in these *Maritime Hamlets*, is a noble Precedent. And therefore, since the inordinate Love of earthly things is the general Hindrance of such-like Pious Gifts, I have fixed my Thoughts (and now come to fix yours) on the words now read in your Ears, to remove that Obstacle out of the way. For, I cannot but promise my self (by the Blessing of God) some degree of Success in perswading Men to Charitable Distributions, when it shall be made appear unto them, That this is the most advantageous Use that can be made of earthly Goods: Much more, of those Superfluities of them which are otherwise Useless, and many times Pernicious to the Owners.

My Text therefore comes to be your kind Monitor this day: For, as sure as the Oracles of God are

are true, your Riches will soon fall into the hands of other Masters, either by their Departure or yours. And if your Faith does not assure you of this, the Examples of others may, and your own Experience soon will. And why then should we not make a Vertue of Necessity? And commit our Goods to such hands as will restore them with infinite increase (in Value, though not in Kind) in that other World, upon which we shall so soon enter, and where we must for ever abide? This is to extract Pearls out of Bubbles; and to gain infinite Advantages from things which are just slipping out of our Hands. For, *Riches certainly make themselves Wings, and flee away.*

Solomon, who made this Remark on the unstable State of Humane things in the Text, was the greatest and wisest Prince of his Times; He enjoy'd all the Delights that his Heart could suggest, or the World supply him withall. And after he had long swam in the most deep and calm Current of Prosperity that can be imagined upon Earth, and had tasted Sensual Pleasures rather like a *Critick* than an *Epicure*; (to see, as he tells us, *what Good there was for Man under the Sun*, Eccl. 2. 3.) and after that he had try'd them all by the Touchstone of his inspired Wisdom; He comes at last to such a Sense of the Emptiness of all Sublunary things, that, though a *Prince*, he becomes a *Preacher*, and gives the World a warm Sermon against Sensuality and Worldly-mindedness, as we read in his whole Book of *Ecclesiastes*. And the Thesis he chose, and on which he largely descants,

descants, was this grand Maxim, *All is Vanity*: Whereupon he proceeds to shew, that the whole Globe of earthly things, upon which Men dote so much, is but a glittering Bubble. It is *Vanity* *it self*, says he; yea, the *Vanity of Vanity*, as if he Eccel. 1. 2. would term it, the Air of Froth, or the Shadow of a Vapour.

It is upon this Subject that this *Royal Preacher* expostulates with Worldly Minds in the Text. He found that a bare Admonition would not bring Men off from those things to which their Hearts were glew'd. And therefore he proceeds to reason the Case with them in an elegant Expostulation in the Text.

" Wilt thou set thine Eyes upon that which is not ?
" Is it becoming the Wisdom of Man, to spend
" his Strength and Time in chasing a Shadow ?
" Or in endeavouring to catch the pleasing Col-
" ours of the Rain-bow ? Are not earthly Riches
" of an unsatisfactory Nature, and a very un-
" certain Tenure ? Do they not often flee away
" (like the shy Bird) from those who passio-
" nately pursue them ? So that they get as far
" out of their reach, as the soaring Eagle who
" flyeth aloft, and despiseth the Horse and his Rider,
" (Job 39. 18.) mocking such as are so vain as to
" pursue her :

Or if these worldly things seem to yield to the violent Courtship of some of their Admirers, and come in a Golden Shower into their Laps. Yet

then, alas! the Possessor, does but grasp a handful of Air, or rather a little heap of slippery Sand, which the faster you endeavour to hold it, the more speedily it runs betwixt your Fingers. They are *winged Creatures*, says my Text, and often spring out of the hand of such as thought they had taken fast hold of them: For, *Riches certainly make themselves wings, they flee away, &c.*

So then the Force of this Argument in the Text, may be thus sum'd up in a Practical *Observation*.

Obfer.

That since Worldly Riches are so empty in their Nature, and so short and uncertain in their Duration; it is a great piece of Folly in Men to place their Affections upon them, or put their Trust in them. *Wilt thou set thine Eyes on that which is not? Wilt thou look with an admiring Eye on such a Phantom? Or wilt thou look with a greedy and covetous Eye on such a Fairy Treasure? How can your Reason brook such a piece of Deceit? Or your Self-love bear such a Disappointment? You will find this to end bitterly, for the pursuit of Vanity can have no other Issue but Vexation.*

So that our *inspired VVise-man* here is dissuading Men from a piece of Vanity which is almost as natural to them as their Animal Life, viz. *The inordinate seeking of temporary Things*; and making little Conscience by what means they compass them. As if *Gain were Godliness* (i. e. the *VVhole of Man*) and *Mammon* such a God as could never be

be loved and served too much. And this the mistaken World calls Wisdom; which gave occasion to that sage Advise in the Verse before the Text, *Labour not to be rich, Cease from thine own Wisdom,* (ver. 4.) As if he had said, Do not make Riches your chief Aim; neither be you over-greedy of them, as your carnal Mind will be apt to be, and think it self mighty wise in so doing. *But seek you the blessed Kingdom of God, and the beatifick Righteousness thereof in the first place;* and (using an honest Industry) leave it to God to give you that measure of earthly things which he sees convenient for you. And thus your outward wants will be easier and better supplied, than by your own unhallowed Desires, and independent Labours.

Wherefore see that you contemn that worldly Wisdom which prompts Men to make their Nest of such things as they can scrape together upon Earth: And when they have raised it as high, and made it as warm as they can, fondly think that they have acquired the chief Happiness of Man. *But this their way is their Folly:* For, they only lift up themselves upon waxen Wings; and the higher they soar in this their carnal Presumption, the more speedy and the more dismal will their Fall be. For, *Riches certainly make themselves wings and flee away as an Eagle towards Heaven,* i.e. out of our reach.

Now, That we may take a full view of this ~~Disswade~~ *Disswade* from ~~worldly-mindedness~~ *worldly-mindedness*, we must allow these few Particulars a due Consideration.

1. We must consider the Emptiness of worldly things in their Nature, They are in the Text called *Things which are not*, i. e. which have not any real Happiness in them for Man.
2. The uncertainty of them in their Possession. *They certainly make themselves wings and flee away*; even with an Eagle's flight; that is, swiftly and irreparably through the upper Air.

And from these two Premises this Conclusion naturally follows, *viz.*

3. That Men are very Indiscreet in fixing their *admiring or coveting Eyes* upon such empty and uncertain things. It is a Folly for which they deserve to be chidden, as in the Text, *Why wilt thou set thine Eyes on that which is not?* On a Phantastick thing which has only a fair Appearance to amuze your Fancy, but no substantial Goodness to satisfy your Desires, or make you Happy.

And from all these Sober Considerations together, it must follow (according to the occasion of our present meeting,)

4. That it is the most profitable and most noble use of Riches, to expend a suitable part of them
in

in the prudent and pious Distributions of Charity. For indeed this is so worthy, so honourable and divine a Thing, that a wise Person would chiefly wish to be rich for this very end, namely, *to glorify God with his Substance*, by doing good to Men. Which, how far better it is in it self, and how much more glorious in its end, than only to serve the base Lusts of a perishing Body (which will quickly be devoured by Worms, and turned into Corruption) let every one that has the least glympse of Reason, or the least grain of Faith, judge.

I. I begin with the Consideration of the empty Nature of earthly Possessions. Possessions, did I say? that is too solid a name for these Shadows, to which the Wisdom of God in the Text, will not allow a place amongst the Rank of *Beings*. And how can we be said to possess *that which is not*? Who ever got possession of a Shadow? Or could ever set his Seal upon a Bubble? And in like manner, Who ever placed his Happiness in worldly Riches, and did not find himself sadly mistaken in the end? Even as much as if he had endeavoured to support himself with a Reed or a Rush.

Riches are indeed the Gift of God when honestly gotten: And so long as they are enjoyed with Thankfulness and Moderation, and employ'd according to the Rules of Piety and Charity, they are God's Blessing: As the wise Pen-man of my Text confesses in another place (*Prov. 10. 22.*)

The

Deut. 28. 47.

Job 31. 24.

The Blessing of the Lord maketh Rich, and he addeth no Sorrow with it, Such as are Rich, may without scruple enjoy a proportionable share of God's allowance themselves. And, being freed by a comfortable Providence, from the Cares and Toiles of their poorer Brethren, they have better Leisure than others, (and greater Engagements too) to serve God with gladness of Heart in the enjoyment of all things. But, if once they make Gold their Hope, and trust in uncertain Riches; or sacrifice the Innocence and Peace of their Consciences to the Mammon of Unrighteousness: This is the Folly condemned in the Text. For, they that do thus, may be truly said, in many Respects, to set their Hearts on that which is not; because they seek that in Riches which they can never find in them. I shall only instance in three things which many think to enjoy in outward Wealth, whereas they are not to be found in it, and that is, The Advancement, the Happiness, and the Satisfaction of Man; which are rare Jewels, that are not to be found in this Soyle; and therefore to aim at these things in the Possession of Riches, is to set their Hearts on that which is not; as will appear in a more particular Consideration of these three things now mentioned.

1. The greatest Accumulation of worldly Wealth is no real *Advancement* to the Man. It gives no degree of Wisdom to his Mind, nor of Goodness to his Will; no Moderation to his Desires, nor Regularity to his Passions. But rather, they are many times the unhappy occasion of the contrary

to

to all these Advancements of *Humane Nature*. For, there are many worldly Minds who dote on *deceitful Riches* to that degree, as to think them an *Universal Accomplishment*. And being thus vainly puff'd up, they despise Instruction, and are impatient of Reproof; and so they grow incorrigible in all their Errors, and precipitate their eternal Ruin. For, their Carnal Hearts being bent towards Sensual Enjoyments, and their Wealth making it easie for them to provide Baits for their Lusts; and as easie to bear down all Opposition from Friends or Enemies, which would stop them in their Course. In this deplorable Case, their Wealth smoothes their way to Destruction, and proves a Fatal Snare which is too seldom broken. Inasmuch that our Blessed Lord assures us, That *it is as easie for a Camel (that great and gibbose Creature) to go thorow the Eye of a Needle, as for such as trust in Riches to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Matt. 19. 24.
Mark 10. 25.
Luke 18. 25.

Hence it also follows,

That the Riches of this World are not our *Happiness*; and that when Men look on them as felicitating things, they *set their Eyes on that which is not*. They are not the Happiness of our Bodies, much less of our Souls. If we were Masters of both the *Indies*, we could not buy off one Stab of the Gout, or one twitch of the Collick, or the least Pang of any acute Distemper. If an Eye be perished, or a Foot Gangren'd, the most massy Treasure cannot restore the decay'd Part to Perfection;

fection; or purchase a healthy Constitution to a crazy and languishing Body.

Much less can we by Riches bribe Death, or purchase one Hours Respite from its Arrest, when it has Commission to break in upon us, and is shaking the very Foundations of our *Earthly Tabernacle* by its last Agonies.

And yet these are low and mean things, if compared with the great Essentials of our Happiness, *viz. The Sense of God's Favour, the Rectitude of our Natures; a Serene State of Mind; the rational Quietude of Conscience; and the comfortable Expectation of a blissful Eternity.* And these are things which can no more be purchased by such base and corruptible things as *Silver and Gold*, than the richest Diadem can be bought with a few Pibbles.

3. Those who fancy that there is *Satisfaction* in earthly things, and desire them for that end, do really *set their Eyes on that which is not*: They feed on Wind, which may create trouble to an empty Stomach, but cannot give it Contentment.

Have Men forgotten that this Earth lyes under the Curse of God? (*Gen. 3. 17.*) *Cursed is the Ground for thy sake.* And can we think our selves perfectly blessed in an Enjoyment which God has accursed? No, no: You shall feel its *Briars and Thorns* in your Breast, if you give it place there; even

even acute Cares and pungent Sorrows, by which (says the Apostle) *many pierce themselves thorow,* (1 Tim. 6. 10.) Thorns are weak and feeble things; and they are barren too, and bear no Sustenance: So that they can only scratch and tear us, but can never sustain or nourish us. And thus, *He that loveth Silver shall not be satisfied with Silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase,* (Eccl. 5. 10.) The Dropsie of Covetousness increases by Indulgence. And indeed, the Heart of Man is too big to be filled with such puny Treasures. It was made for an *Infinite God*, and therefore no Measure of Finite Beings can give it Satisfaction.

That Wealthy Man (in the Parable of our Lord, Luke 12. 18.) who having his Barns and Chests full, began to lull his Soul to sleep upon that Supposition, saying, *Soul take thine Ease, thou hast Goods laid up for many Years.* In this he spake very foolishly, for the Goods of the Soul cannot be laid up in Barns: And if they could, a Provision for *many Years* signifies very little to a Soul that must live for ever. So that the Bed was too short for him to stretch himself upon; and therefore it is no wonder that we find him taking such a short sleep upon it; for at mid-night he is awa-ken'd by the *Terrors of the Lord*, and receives a Summons to appear before God, where he is arraigned by the Name of *Fool*, and is condemned as such by God and his own Conscience; for then he finds that his *Idol of Gold* is really *nothing* (as the Apostle says 1 Cor. 8. 4.) And that in ad-

miring his abundant Wealth, he had *set his Eyes on that which is not, viz.* upon that which can neither *improve his Intellectuals*, nor refine his *Morals*; nor present him with any *competent Happiness*, nor any *tolerable Satisfaction*, which were the three things to be spoken to, in which we see the Emptiness of earthly things.

II. We proceed now in the next place, to consider the Uncertainty of these Sublunary things, which the Text describes in these words, *For Riches certainly make themselves Wings and flee away as an Eagle towards Heaven.* In which every word is emphatical.

First, They have Eagles Wings, i. e. so strong and lofty that we can never clip them. The Eagle's Flight is above our reach; they *fly towards Heaven, i. e.* with such a towering loftiness, that our Eye can scarce reach them, much less our Hand. Even so, nothing can ensure our earthly Possessions; the most fertile Lands may, by the Judgment of God, be turn'd into Barrenness, as the Land of *Palestine* (once *the Land flowing with Milk and Honey*) is said to be at this day. The most pleasant and desirable Scituation, may be rendred uninhabitable and intolerable; as the Land about *Sodom*, which once for its beauty was compared to *the Garden of the Lord*, is now a sulphurous and noisom Lake. The most stately *Pallace* may by some sudden *Hurricane* be laid flat in a moment, and bury its Inhabitants in the Rubbish of it; as in the Case of *Job's Children*, who in the height

Deut. 6. 3.

Gen. 13. 10.

Job 1. 19.

of

of their Feasting and Merriment came to this deplorable End. A Storm at Sea, or an Enemy there, may soon sink the richest Cargo, and thereby turn many Wealthy Families into Melancholly Societies of distressed Widows and Orphans. *England* is accounted a Wealthy Nation, but our Riches chiefly come to us by those winged Caravans, our Ships, which I beseech God to preserve and prosper: For he has shewn us by many dreadful Storms within these seven Years, wherein some Hundreds of Ships and Thousands of Men were lost, how easily he can clip these Wings which bear up our Nation, and thereby sink our Renown, and Wealth, and Safety in one common Grave. Or perhaps some lighter matter may deprive a particular Person or Family of the Wealth of this World: It being a known Case, that a Gentleman lost an Estate of many Thousand Pounds a Year, for want of inserting three words in a Deed of Settlement. Thus we see that the Foundation of Temporal things is Sandy, and the Tenure uncertain; and let Men do what they can, they can never pinion the Wings of these fleeting Enjoyments, nor prevent their Flight from us.

Secondly, They make their Wings themselves, Riches make themselves Wings, i. e. It is their Nature to be on the Wing, and to flee away. They every day become more fledg'd than other, and are more likely to be gone from us. Like some sorts of Aits, which at certain Periods of time have Wings naturally shooting forth; and

when these little Creatures, being fond of their Wings, mount upwards with them, they soon become a Prey to the Swallows and other Birds. A creeping lowliness of Life has more Safety (though less Splendor) than a towering Ambition. And we are told from the best of Authors, That *they that will be rich, fall into Temptation and a Snare, and pierce themselves thorow with many Sorrows,* 1 Tim. 6. 9, 10.

Thirdly, We must note the Asseveration of this, They *Certainly* make themselves Wings. You will do well to expect it, for you are very like to find it so, either in part or in the whole. Nothing in earthly things is more assured than their Inconstancy: And therefore they are usually called *Goods of Fortune*: Not that they come or go by chance, but that they are subject to such an Instability and Uncertainty, that their coming and going may, as to any fore-sight of ours, be termed a sort of Fortuity.

Fourthly, When Riches are gone, they are many times utterly irreparable, *They fly away as an Eagle towards Heaven*, i. e. above our reach, and beyond our recovery. By *Heaven* here, is not meant, The State of the *Blessed*; as if Riches went up thither. No, the very *Heathen* had other Notions of the Tendency of Wealth; who thought their *Pluto* to be both the God of *Riches* and of *Hell*. And it is no wonder, that the Devil perswaded those profess'd Votaries of his, that earthly Greatness was his Gift; since he attempted to perswade *Christ* himself

himself to this, though absolutely in vain, viz. *That all the Power and Glory of earthly Kingdoms were at his disposal, (Luke 4. 6.)*

Thus have I (as briefly as I well could) considered the *empty Nature* and *uncertain Tenure* of earthly things: The other two Propositions which I proposed to speak to, are the *Practical Conclusions* which we ought to make from the Premises, and therefore will be the proper *Application* of what has been said. So then,

Since the Riches of this World are manifestly such empty and uncertain things; it will be great Indiscretion to set our Eyes upon them, i. e. either to *admire* them, *covet* them, or *trust* in them. For all these are implied in this Expression, of *setting our Eyes on Riches*. For;

III.

(1.) What we admire we gaze at, and fix our Eyes upon, and can scarcely take our Eyes off it, it being the *Desire of our Eyes*. Thus does Gold dazle the Eyes of the Worldly-minded, and engross their Affections.

(2.) What we greatly Covet, we look wishfully and passionately upon. And therefore *Horace* describes a contented Man, as *one that can pass by great Treasures, without looking back upon them*.

*Qui oculo in-
sorto Nummo-
rum prospicit
acervos. Hor.*

(3.) What

Eph. 5. 5.
Col. 3. 5.

(3.) What we put our Trust in, we often cast our Eyes upon. And this is the Reason, why a Good Man so often looks upward, and the Worldly Man downward: And this is the reason, why the Covetous Person is mark'd out in the Scripture as an *Idolater*, viz. because *He makes Gold his Hope; and says to fine Gold, Thou art my Confidence,* (Job 31. 24.)

But in all these three Casts of the worldly Man's Eye, he does but misguide and deceive himself: And how pertinently does the wise Man reprove him in the Text, *Why wilt thou set thine Eyes on that which is not?* Why will you admire, covet or confide in a Vapour or Shadow?

Let this quicken us to set our Affections on things above, where every thing is infinitely worthy and permanent; and not on these finite and fading things below. How can we be thought to believe the Promises of God, concerning the glorious State of blessed Souls in the eternal Kingdom above; if we set so light by it, as to think oftener, and desire and pursue more the Dung-hill things of this Earth, than the Divine Blifs of that Future State.

1st. Mart.
pol. 2. p. 8.
1em. Alex.
rom. 6.

This Spiritual Elevation of Mind is so Essential to a Christian Life, that we find two of the ancient Fathers numbering *Socrates* in the Rank of *Christians* before Christ, because he dyed for asserting the only true God; and because it was part of his Accusation, *That he was one, that did set himself to seek better things than this Earth afforded, even things*

17617 τὰ ὤντα
lū, 2) τὰ ἰ-
υγεία Plut.
pol. Socr. 31.

in Heaven. Which made him take his last Farewel of his Adversaries, and of this World, in these words: "*It is time for me to go and dye; and for you to learn to live; which is best, is known to God.*" Alas! What a Shame will it be for Christians that live in the State of the Gospel, which for its Divine Glory is called the *Kingdom of Heaven*, to be out-done by *Moral Heathens* in Heavenly-mindedness. O *Christians!* ascend in your Affections to that State, to which Christ (the Desire of your Souls) is ascended. Let us prepossess that happy Place by our Heavenly Minds and Hearts, which we hope to possess e'er long in Soul and Body. May we all, with Divine *Moses*, esteem the reproached Religion and Grace of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, greater Riches than all the tinsel Treasures of this vain World. And since we say, we hope for Heaven, let us make due Returns of our Temporal things thither; which is certainly the best Improvement of earthly things that can be made. And this is the last thing I proposed to speak to, *viz.*

Mark 1. 15.
Luke 17. 21.

That to bestow a suitable part of our Wealth in Pious and Charitable Distributions (as the Glory of God and the Necessities of our Bretheren give us Occasion) will be the most Prudent and Profitable Disposal of these fleeting things. For, this is to make the last words of my Text true in a literal Sense; namely, to make your *Riches fly towards Heaven indeed.* And so you will send your Provisions before you thither, and be Rich in both Worlds.

IV.

Worlds, even rich towards God here, and rich in God for ever. Now, since *Riches certainly have Wings*, and will be gone: How much better is it to direct their Flight upwards, by *Charity, Hospitality, and Piety*, to our eternal Ornament and Entertainment; than to send them downwards by *Luxury, Pride, or any Abuse* of them, there to eat our *Flesh like Fire*, as St. James assures us they will, (*James 5. 3.*)

Rev. 14. 13.

The Good Works of Charitable People, follow them into the unseen World, and attend them even before the Tribunal of God, like so many Carriages of Furniture and Provisions. And though they Merit nothing there at the Hand of God, (who gave us both the Alms we bestow, and a Will to do it) yet they are such a Fruit of our Faith, as God has promised to reward with infinite Returns. Of this our Judge himself assures us (*Matt. 25, 34, &c.*) *Come ye Blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the World: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me Meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me Drink: I was a Stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: Sick, and ye visited me: I was in Prison, and ye came unto me.* This was not done indeed to the Person of Christ, but to *Christians*, who when they are indeed what their Name speaks them to be, they are the Members of Christ's Mystical Body: And whatever Kindness or Unkindness is done to them, is virtually done to Christ himself, and is so construed

strued by him (Ver. 40.) *In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me.* As if our Blessed Lord should say at the last day, *I know thy Works, O my Faithful Servant ! I saw thee giving such and such an Alms in secret, which the World never knew. I beheld thee making thy Charitable Doles to the Hungry, Thirsty, Naked, and Destitute. Mine Eye went with thee to such and such a Poor Family, to such an Hospital, and such a Prison, whither thy Charity led thee, to consider and relieve their Wants. Thou hast done these things in secret, and I will reward thee openly : Enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.* *Thou Sowedst plentifully, and shalt Reap plentifully : Thy Prayers and thine Alms are come up before me, and as thou hast Sowed to the Spirit, (employing thy self and Goods for Spiritual Ends) thou shalt of the Spirit reap eternal Life.* *I am not ashamed to call thee Brother, since thou takest of my Charitable and Divine Temper : Come my dear Brother, my welcome Co-heir of that Kingdom which is prepared for such Faithful Stewards as thou hast been.*

Matt. 25. 23.
2 Cor. 9. 6.
Acts 10. 4.
Gal. 6. 8.
Heb. 2. 11.
Rom. 8. 17.

O ! Who would not make such a Friend with the *Mammon of Unrighteousness* ! What a glorious End is here, of our Ministring to the Servants of Christ upon Earth ! O Sirs ! We do not circumvent you, when we exhort you to Alms-deeds and Good Works. We do not come to rob you of your Treasures, when we earnestly

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press your Charity: But we give you the Opportunities of doing good to your selves, and to become *Rich in Good Works*; which is the noblest and most valuable Riches in the whole World.

1 Tim. 5. 18.

Wherefore, *with-hold not Good from such to whom (by the Law of Charity) it is due, whilst it is in the Power of thine Hand to do it,* (Prov. 3. 27.) Deferr not all your Charity to your last Will and Testament: Your Wealth may slip out of your Hand before that hour; or however, methinks it is not then so properly in your Possession, when within a Minute or two it will be another's. But better late than never; though the sooner we do it, the surer will the Distribution be, the more Heroick the Vertue, the more Eminent our Faith, and the more Weighty our Reward.

1 Tim. 6. 12.

Do we indeed believe, that an Omniscient Righteous God governs the World? And do we own the Holy Scriptures as his Word? And doth God say, *Blessed are the Merciful, for they shall obtain Mercy,* (Matt. 5. 7.) If so, we cannot but be *ready to distribute, and glad to communicate* Glad of the happy Opportunity of exchanging Temporals for Eternals. We know who says, *That he that giveth to the Poor, lendeth to the Lord; and what he giveth shall be repaid him again,* (Prov. 19. 17.) And it will be repaid with ample yea infinite Increase. The Judge himself tells

tells you in what manner (*Luke 6. 38.*) Give and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, into your Bosom.

Let me then freely speak to you whose Cup of Plenty overflows; who perhaps scarce know how to bestow your Goods, the Hand of God having been very liberal to you. Why? Here are safe Repositories for your Grain; the best Bags for your Money; Bags that wax not old: Here is a Royal Bank which will never fail, (*Luke 12. 33.*) *Luke 12. 17.*

Let your Faith then freely cast your Bread upon the Waters, and it will be securely transported to the other World, and will there be safely laid up for your Use; and if your Sins do not obstruct it, you will reap the Comfort of it ten thousand Years hence. *Eccel. 11. 1.*

See then, here are Bills of Exchange ready: God hath subscribed it with his own Hand, that he will repay in the other World, what you piously and charitably bestow in this, if the rest of our Life be agreeable herewith. Dare you Credit him upon whom the Bills are drawn? Yea, dare you scruple his Sufficiency or Integrity?

Leontius who lived at *Cyrene*, and was a most Faithful and Religious Person, hath Recorded it for a certain Truth*, says an Author of our own, That *Evagrius* a Philosopher turning Christian, ** Dying and dead Men Sayings. p. 113.*

stian, and bestowing 300 l. on the Poor, by the Persuasion of the Pious Bishop *Synesius*; for the Repayment of which by Christ, in the things of another World, the said Bishop had given him a Note under his Hand. 'Tis said that the same *Evagrius* appeared to *Synesius* a little after his Death, and bad him open his Coffin, and there he should find a Receipt written by his own Hand, in token that he had received in the World above, the Rewards promised to Charity in this. And this Receipt (saith *Leontius*) was carefully kept in the Church at *Cyrene* in his time, and was shewn to any one that desired it. This passage is quoted by many Divines as an authentic Relation; but if any think there may be Falshood in it, I am sure there is none in that sure word of Prophecie (*Mark 10. 21.*) *Give to the Poor, and thou shalt have Treasure in Heaven.* And though the *Pharisees* who were covetous derided these Doctrines of Christ; Far be it, Far be it from all that have the Honour to bear the Name of Christ, thus to contradict and Blaspheme. For, true Religion and undefiled before God, is to visit the Fatherless and the Widows in their Affliction, and to keep our selves unspotted by the World, (*James. 1. 27.*)

Luke 16. 14.

This, this is that which renders the Name of Captain *William Curtis* venerable to this day. He has left us such an abiding Charity, as is not like to sink or be diminished to the end of the World. So that by the Hands of his deputed Trustees,
the

the *Prison-doors* are opened every other Year, and a little *Jubilee* celebrated. The hungry Bowels are refreshed every Week; the mournful Widows Heart is made to sing; and (what is no less a Charity) the youthful Hands are taught to work, and put in a way to be useful to their Country. And that his *Trustees* might not be meer Conduit-pipes of his Bounty, to transmit all to others without tasting a Drop themselves; there is a prudent Allotment of a suitable Portion for a Frugal Collation at their Annual Meeting to make the appointed Distributions. These were the Effects of a charitable, bountiful, and friendly Soul: The Advantages of which to the truly charitable Donors, are as certain, and more great, than the Benefits done to those who partake of such Bounty here upon Earth.

Let us then, according to our Ability, follow so good a Precedent in a Point of such unquestionable Advantage. A part of our Estate bless'd by God, is much better than the whole unblest'd by Him. And a Greek Poet wittily calls this, *A way to make a Part greater than the Whole* *.

* Νάμους, ὁ
ἰσχυρὸν ἔσται
τάλιον ἡμῶν
παιτός. Ηοσι
Βίβ. α.

Let us then offer up the First-Fruits to God, that the whole Crop may be bless'd by him, and Sanctified to us. When *Manna* it self was hoarded up, from a Principle of Covetousness and Distrust, it bred *Worms* and *stank*; but when the same was laid up from a Principle of Piety, it was preserved, to the Comfort of the Owners (*Exod. 16. 24.*)

Exod. 16. 2

To

To close-up all then : You see how greatly it concerns us, to fix our Minds on the permanent Substance of good things above, and not on the fading Shadows of them beneath. In order to which, let us beg of God, that he would vouchsafe to breathe a Spiritual Warmth towards Divine things in all our Breasts by his Holy Spirit ; that so when *earthly Riches take their wing*, our Comfort and Peace may not flee away with them. That we may not say with *Micah*, *They have taken away my Gold and Silver, and what have I more?* But with *St. Paul*, *we know that we have in Heaven a far better and more induring Substance.* Which I pray God grant unto us all, through *Jesus Christ our Lord.* *Amen.*

Judges 18. 24.

Hcb. 10. 34.

F I N I S.